

6 May 1965

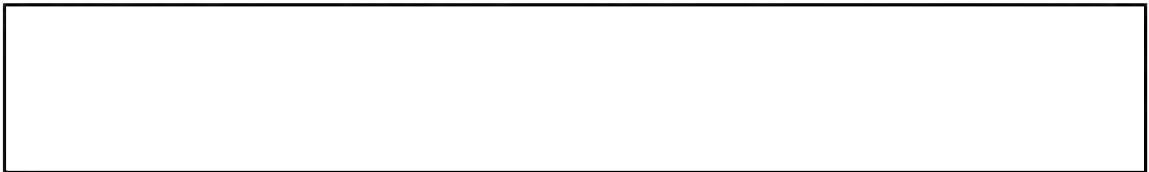
MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Report on 10 April - 4 May 1965 Visit to Vietnam

FROM : George A. Carver, Jr., Far East Staff,
Office of National Estimates

I PLACES VISITED AND PERSONS SEEN:

1. I was in Vietnam for a total of 23 days, and spent about two thirds of this time in Saigon and one third in the provinces.



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Ambassador Taylor, spoke with most of the section chiefs in J2 of MACV, talked to the J3 Brigadier General De Puy. On the Vietnamese side I talked to General Phon Van Dong (recently deposed head of the capital military district), General Ky (Chief of the Air Force), General Khang (Commander of the Marine Corps), General Minh (Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces), and General Thieu (then Minister of Defense). I also talked with a number of GVN government officials, including several members of Premier Quat's brain trust in immediate staff, with several prominent lay Buddhists, spent over two hours with

Tri Quang, talked to a number of Catholics, several intellectuals, several Vietnamese newspaper editors and publishers, a number of businessmen (both Vietnamese and US), a student leader, and a number

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[REDACTED] At Ambassador

Johnson's request, I did not see Prime Minister Quat because the Ambassador felt that Quat was too harrassed by a large number of US visitors. Inasmuch as I did see a number of his close advisors, little was probably lost by this omission. In the provinces, I personally visited Vung Tau, Bonmethuot, Pleiku (II Corps Headquarters), Kontum and outposts north of Kontum including Dak Sut, Tuy Hoa (Phuyen province capital), Qui Nhon (Binh Dinh province capital), Quang Ngai, DaNang (I Corps Headquarters), Hue, Nha Trong (Khanh Hoa province capital), My tho (7th Division Headquarters), Vinh Long, Cantho (IV Corps Headquarters), Bac Lieu (21st Division Headquarters), and Tay Ninh (seat of the Cao Dai religion and a critical frontier province capital). I spoke with a wide variety of US officials including senior corps advisors, General Karch, Commandant of the

US Marine Brigade at DaNang, corps and division G-2 advisors, sector advisors, special forces officers, and sector S-2's. On the Vietnamese side, I talked to province chiefs, police officials, civic action officers, and a variety of Vietnamese military figures including assistant division commanders, provincial military deputies, and G-2's and S-2's at corps and division levels. I did not see everyone that I wanted to see, but nor did I visit every place I wanted to inspect; but I do feel that in the time available I got a reasonably comprehensive cross section of informed local opinion, both American and Vietnamese.

II PRINCIPAL FINDINGS:

2. The conclusions or general observations learned from my trip which struck me as being of major importance were: (1) Vietnamese morale was considerably better than I had anticipated, almost entirely as a result of US bombing of North Vietnam and increased US participation in the war in the South (employment of air power, landing of troupes in DaNang, etc.). I found almost none of the defeatism, discouragement, and inclinations to neutralism which apparently were prevalent in

February before the current pattern of US air attacks on the North began. (2) There has been an appreciable improvement in the performance of the GVM military, including not only the performance of ARVN regular forces but also of regional and popular forces (the old civil guard and SDC) in at least some areas. (3) A site on political situation is temporarily stable, rather more so perhaps than it has ever been since November 1963, although there are notting tensions beneath the surface which could erupt in the near future, and provide fresh difficulties on the national political scene. (4) There are a number of major difficulties in key Vietnamese command and control relationships, particularly such relationships as they affect the province chief, which unless rectified will pose serious obstacles to real progress, (6) The Viet Cong (VC) are almost certainly going to mount a serious of coordinated attacks in the near future which, in sum, will involve waging war on a wider scale than the VC have ever attempted heretofore.

3. The situation in South Vietnam remains, as always, complicated, complex, influenced by a wide variety of interacting elements.

Unqualified generalizations are difficult to make and of little value.

(It is pointless to say, for example, whether one comes back from such a trip as I have just completed more "optimistic" or "pessimistic" than he was upon his departure from Washington.) A better appreciation of the overall situation can be gained if one factors out and discusses separately some of the major aspects of the total picture and some of the problem areas. This I have attempted to do below before presenting at the end a more general appraisal and overall estimate of how the situation may evolve in the forthcoming weeks and months.

III THE NATIONAL POLITICAL PICTURE:

4. On the surface the national political picture is calmer and rather more stable than it has been for many months, perhaps even since November 1963. Almost three months have passed since the coup of 19 February and its aftermath which put the Quat government in power, and although Quat arouses little emotional enthusiasm, he has succeeded in keeping things on a reasonably even keel. In the present fragile state of South Vietnamese national politics, the fact that

even three months could pass without another major crisis building is in itself a potentially hopeful sign. This surface calm, however, is somewhat elusory; pensions are building in certain areas and though they have not yet erupted into action they do cause grounds for future concern. Quat obviously is in a very delicate position and he has moved with extreme caution in consolidating. Many-- particularly in the Army, political parties, and among the Buddhists-- feel he has moved too cautiously, and there is a significant amount of discontent in influential quarters over what is there viewed as Quat's timorousness and indecisiveness. Quat obviously has to be careful and if he takes too firm a grasp on the reins of power runs the very real risk of alienating the military support without which he cannot survive in office. Nevertheless, he almost certainly could proceed more forcefully than he has to date. He would almost certainly be more successful if he acted as if he had more power than he actually does for even though there is obviously a delicate line he cannot risk overstepping, many in influential quarters would

welcome a firmer lead on his part and be perfectly willing to follow him. If he continues to proceed along his present course, however, he is going to run the very serious risk of alienating influential opinion and personalities who believe that the present situation calls for a firmer hand.

5. The most disturbing feature of the national or Saigon scene is the rapidly mounting suspicion between Buddhists and Catholics, between whom a wall of new antagonism is fast building. The most dangerous aspect of this situation is the fact that communication between moderates and men of good will in both religious camps seems to be dwindling to the point of disappearance for without such communication the activities of extremists on both sides become much more difficult to curb and control. Right wing Catholics, particularly Northern refugee priests, are constantly

25X1 in fact to anyone who will listen, the most outrageous stories about the Buddhists, many of which seem patently the products of morbidly pathological suspicion and

overactive imagination. These stories include varied insinuations regarding Communist activity among the Buddhists, Communist affiliations of leading Buddhist figures, and dark political designs or Buddhist plots to seize power. The upshot of these tales is to provide a rationale capable of convincing the Catholics that they are justified in taking pre-emptive action. On the Buddhist side similar suspicion of Catholic plan and intent and motives are rapidly mounting. For example, when I talked with Tri Quang one of the subjects which agitated him most was a report he had received and was convinced was true that Father Hoang Quynh (a leading northern refugee priest) and General Tran Van Minh were hatching a plan to arm 600 Catholics in the region between Phuoc Thuy and Bien Hoa. When I pointed out to Tri Quang that even if this story did have some basis and fact, it probably related to nothing more than an attempt to raise additional popular forces in this area, that by their very nature popular forces to be effective had to be indigenous to the area in which they operated,

and hence that any popular force units raised from an area in which most of the inhabitants were northern Catholic refugees (as is the case in the area in question) would necessarily be predominately Catholic. I tried to argue, therefore, that even if this story had some basis and fact it did not necessarily reflect any sinister Catholic design. Tri Quang saw the rational points of my arguments but obviously found them emotionally quite unconvincing. He kept harping on the theme that it was a bad thing to raise forces of any kind with a primarily religious orientation; and he seemed convinced that any Catholic regional forces raised in the Phuoc Thuy/Bien Hoa area--however much they might fight the Communists--would have the capability and intent of menacing Saigon to threaten the Buddhists in any renewed political crisis. If the Catholics went ahead with this plan, he insisted, the Buddhists would have to prepare themselves to take defensive action. In sum, where there is tranquility on the religious surface at the moment in South Vietnam, new tensions are

fast rising which, if not damped down, could easily produce another serious crisis in the fairly near future.

6. About the most immediate threat to national political stability is the very real possibility of another coup attempt by Colonel Pham Ngoc Thau and his followers--i.e., essentially the same predominantly Catholic-and neo-Diemist group which have tried twice before in September of 1964 and February of 1965. Colonel Thau is still at large and engaged in his usual occupation of fomenting trouble. A number of people think, and some insist, that the GVN knows exactly where he is but is reluctant to arrest him for fear of alienating Catholic opinion. Others are equally adamant in insisting that Thau is the ^{present} main threat to political stability, that the GVN is actively looking for him, and that he will be shot on sight whenever he can be found. (This latter version was propounded to me with great emphasis for the director general of the national police and by a lawyer whom I have known for years who is now one of Quat's and General Thi's leading unofficial advisors.) Whatever be the truth on this matter,

the fact remains that Thau is probably engaged in coup plotting, does have support in right wing Catholic circles, probably could command the allegiance of at least a few junior ARVN officers with small troupe commands (DG platoons or even possibly companies) and is very capable of fomenting trouble. Thau and his followers could not, I believe, topple the government but they could well make another abortive attempt which, if launched, could severely damage the image of improved stability that has been built up over the past three months and create a situation which might not be disastrous in Saigon but would loom very large abroad (e.g., on the pages of the New York Times).

7. Quat's government (or for that matter any present South Vietnamese government) cannot survive without the support of the military establishment. So far, Quat has enjoyed that support, but there are some signs of restlessness or displeasure with his lack of aggressive performance. General Thieu (who was Minister of Defense when I spoke with him on 29 April) very pointedly expressed his displeasure at Quat's reluctance to act decisively and even suggested

that should some elements of South Vietnamese society feel impelled to move against him, the armed forces might not consider it in the national interest to back Quat in a crisis situation. Thieu made it very obvious that the armed forces, or at least the senior generals feel they have the right to blow the whistle on the civilian government of whose policies and actions they disapprove. In fact, Thieu repeatedly referred to the armed forces as the principal custodians of the national interest, and to the Armed Forces Council as "the supreme empire" in contemporary Vietnamese political life. Thieu has not resigned as Minister of Defense and the Armed Forces Council has been officially dissolved, but this potential military displeasure with Quat's performance still probably exists and so long as it does exist constitutes at least a latent problem for the future.

8. In sum, although the national political scene is considerably more stable than it has been in a long time, we are far from out of the woods. There are those, including a number of officers in the Embassy, who argue that every day Quat remains in power his hand is

thereby strengthened and a further incliment of stability achieved.

This is not entirely true. The affect on stability of each additional day that Quat remains in office really depends on the use to which he puts that added day of grace. The more time he is allowed, the more he can do; but we urr if we believed that he would necessarily strengthen his hand or prevent latent tensions from rising ever closer to the surface simply by remaining in office.

IV THE SITUATION IN THE PROVINCES: THE MILITARY INGREDIENT

9. It is a truism that the situation in South Vietnam arised from a complex amount of military and political factors. It is also true that political attitudes heavily influence and condition the possibilities of long-term military success. Nevertheless, it is important to realize that there is a purely and in a sense conventionally military element to the present picture. Regardless of his motivation or the political factors which may have contributed to his present strength, when an enemy has forces organized into companies, battalions, regiments, and possibly even brigades, whenhe uses 57 and 75 mm

recoilless rifles, heavy machine guns, and other forms of ordinance, when there are abundant signs that he is preparing to employ artillery support, you have an enemy engaged in military operations who must be countered with military action. On the purely military side, the GVN has made some progress during recent months, even though this progress is a bit spotty, it is more noticable in some areas than others, and many problems remain still unsolved. To spite the qualifications, however, GVN performance since TET has been encouraging. ARVN forces have been fighting more aggressively and more effectively and have been inflicting sizeable losses on the VC in some areas and have been capturing significant quantities of VC stores and supplies. Furthermore, there have been spotty but nonetheless happening improvements in the performance of GVN regional and popular forces in at least some areas. On balance, the purely military activities in the past few months have definately favored the GVN side, even though GVN forces have themselves suffered casualties and met with occasional reverses. Yet as with the political

situation, some of this apparent military progress is a bit elusive. It is important to remember that since TET, the VC themselves have initiated virtually no large-scale military action. Such engagements that have occurred have almost invariably resulted from ARVN codes into what areas the VC considered sensitive and in which they are unwilling to let government forces come without a fight. Top VC offensive capabilities, (as described in more detail below) have yet to be put to the test of battle. And the apparent improvement in stability in some areas is attributable as much to lack of VC action as it is to GVN military success.

10. To spite significant improvements and outward performance in some areas and regions, a number of little problems still remain. Among some GVN generals there is still an excessive tendency to rely on activity and air support in a comadant reluctance to engage the enemy on the ground. ARVN has won battles, but it has also lost ~~them~~ others through poor morale or reluctance to take aggressive action. Furthermore, there are serious command and control problems

within the GVN military structure, many of these deriving from the fact that no unit commander has the authority to relieve or replace commanders of units subordinate to him: A corps commander cannot replace his division commanders, a division commander cannot replace his regimental commanders; a regimental, his battalion commanders; a battalion, his company commanders. Replacement perhaps can be affected in the case of flagrant insubordination, but not on more general grounds or inadequate performance of duty. This means that orders given in higher echelons are not always obeyed at lower echelons, and frequently not carried out with the type of drive and enthusiasm the superior commander has every right to expect. Furthermore, ARVN still has a critical manpower problem. General Minh, the Commander-in-Chief, told me privately that he has only three battalions of his general reserve which are not already committed. To counter any major VC attack, he would have to pool units from present operations in order to meet a new threat, that would consequently run the unavoidable risk of having the VC mount additional threats in the areas denuded

of troupes. His answer to the manpower problem--apart from the immediate solution of additional US forces which could be useful if properly employed--is the intelligent one of building up the popular and regional forces. General Minh argues, convincingly, that whereas many present youths would be reluctant to join the ARVN their service would almost certain take them far away from their homes and native districts, they would be considerably less reluctant to enroll the popular or regional forces where they could stay within their own provinces and close to their own families and fields. A significant improvement in the strength and capabilities of popular and regional forces with three additional regulars for use as regulars and hence go far to alleviate the present manpower crisis.

11. Actually, the performance of regional and popular forces in recent months is one of the most heartening aspects of the military situation. In Dinh Dinh, for example, a regional force company commanded by an energetic and effective local officer recently took

out and demolished a VC main force battalion. As a result of this and other successes regional force morale in that area is now extremely high and locals are endeavoring to sign up--not for the regional forces general, but to serve in this particular officer's company. Elsewhere performance among the popular forces has also improved, e.g. in the Nam Cam district in An Zuyen province, a government enclave on the Camau peninsula in the heart of VC controlled territory, which continues to exist as an area of government presence primarily because of the energy and effectiveness of the local district leader and the fighting spirit he has thus been able to impart into his local popular forces.

12. On the military side, the picture therefore and spotty in recent months have certainly provided more grounds for encouragement and discouragement, even though the real test of current GVN military capabilities is probably yet to come.

V THE SITUATION IN THE PROVINCES: CLASSIFICATION

13. The purely military deal constitutes one level or aspect

of the war, another is the question of classification--i.e., the problem of extending government presence in rural areas and enabling local government forces to cope with at least their opposite numbers in the VC order of battle (e.g. local platoons and district companies, even though one cannot expect such local GVN forces to cope with conventionally organized and equipped GVN main force elements.) The classification program is spotty in the extreme, but nonetheless there are heartening signs of progress in some areas. Particularly in the northern coastal provinces (from Qui Nhon through Thua Thien and even into Quang Tri) a good deal of useful and encouraging work is being done. The most interesting program in this sphere is that the Agency-supported People's Action Teams 40 man armed groups raised from a district, controlled by a province chief, and returned prominently to the district in which they were born to establish a government presence and make some sort of link for the local villages. The PAT and the like programs are not going to win the war by themselves, but they are having an affect in the areas in which they

have been employed to date and constitute a program capable of considerable expansion.

14. Even though the classification shows encouraging developments in some areas, many of the basic problems still remain. Throughout the country there remains to be a continuing problem of poor relations between GVN conventional military forces and the local populace, though this is worse in some areas than in others. In I corps, the General Ky is siezed the problem and has taken foreign action to improve it, things are better than they are in some other regions, in IV corps, things are probably the worst under this particular scale. faced with problems of corruption at lower provincial levels, particularly that of the district chief. The chief of special branch of the national police for the western region (i.e. that portion of the delta south of the Dassac River) told me in great confidence that many if not most of the district chiefs in this critical delta area are extremely corrupt and interested more in lining their own pockets than in improving the welfare of the people under their charge. In one district, for

example, the district chief blackmailed all of the wealthy local citizens by threatening to report them as Viet Cong if they did not pay him a significant portion of their income. In another district, wealthy families were required to give a certain percentage of their rice crop to their district chief who would call down mortar and fire artillery on their homes if they did not comply. If the police official heard, these situations occurred in areas close to corps headquarters where the district chiefs were under at least nominal supervision. Districts farther away from the center of power reflected an even worse situation.

VI THE SITUATION IN THE PROVINCES: THE INTERACTION BETWEEN MILITARY ACTIVITY AND CLASSIFICATION PROGRAMS

15. Over the longer term, perhaps the most critical feature of the whole operation of Vietnam is that of an effective mesh between the tyranny military activities of the GVN and its pacification program.

Unless these two activities proceed more or less in tandem and reinforce each other, military clearing will create only temporary improvement and the back of the insurgency can never be broken. At the moment it is my considered opinion that these two aspects of government activity are not proceeding at tandem and certainly are not mutually reinforcing supporting each other. The key figure in this blend or mix is the province chief, eventually all cases consult a military officer, (usually a lieutenant) and ideally a point of contact coordination and control between purely military activities and ^{of} more politically oriented phases of classification. The province chief's role is essential and it is perhaps not too great an exaggeration to say that on the shoulders of these 45 men rest by in large the ultimate outcome of the war. At the present time, however, the province chief does not have the authority to discharge his extremely heavy responsibilities and his task, because of current administrative arrangements, is virtually impossible to perform.

The most significant problem area here, is that of the province chief's command and control arrangements--or lack thereof--with three significant elements: (1) his division commander, (2) the commanders of any ARVN units operating in his province, (3) his district chiefs.

16. In the military sphere, the province chief is the nominal subordinate of the ~~division~~ commander of the division with territorial responsibility for his province. (In US province we speak of GVN corps and divisions, significantly the GVN is more prone to speak of corps tactical zones of division tactical areas, which is really closer to the truth if the corps commander and a division commander have in essence a regional responsibility rather than the simple straightforward task of commanding units in an organized line of battle). ARVN regular forces operating in a province are assigned there at the pleasure of the division commander and may be replaced or withdrawn by him at any time at his entire discretion. This means that a province chief never has a known force level with which to work or on which to base his plans. If, for example, he has an

ARVN battalion in his province, and adjusts and arranges his regional and popular force tasking accordingly, if the battalion is withdrawn the province chief's plans are torpedoed and he must make scrabbling rearrangements to account for this sudden drop in his forces. Regular units are frequently withdrawn and often of no notice. So long as this situation persists, it is very difficult, almost impossible, for the province chief to do the kind of military planning necessary to discharge his classification function.

17. The province chief's relations to the commanders of any ARVN units operating in each province are particularly tricky, especially if the unit in question is a regiment (as it sometimes is) and doubly so if the commander of that regiment should happen to be a slightly more senior lieutenant colonel than the province chief. ARVN units operating in a province are nominally under the province chief's command, but only nominally. The unit commanders almost invariably consider themselves directly subordinate to the division and are extremely reluctant to take orders from the chief of the province.

Often considerations of pride and face unit commanders will defy or act in deliberate violation of province chief's request. For example, if a province chief requests that the ARVN regiment in his province operate primarily in District X, the regimental commander will often insist on operating in District Y. It is in short, the province chief in most cases has no ^{real} ~~legal~~ or effective control over the activities or departments of ARVN regular forces operating within his province. He also has little control over the behavior of the troops assigned to these regular units. In a number of provinces, the province chiefs only too well aware of the political and psychological problems caused by poor relations between the populace and the ARVN regulars operating therein, problems frequently deriving from ill disciplined behavior on the part of the regular troops (indiscriminate shooting, chicken stealing, molestation of women, etc.). But the province chief's hands are tied, because when he would request the disciplinary action be taken, the ARVN unit commanders more often than not cited with an attempt to protect their troops.

18. Another problem area is that of the province chief's relation to his own nominal subordinates the district chiefs. The province chief cannot replace the district chief, nor if the district chief is replaced can the province chief nominate his successor, indeed he does not even have a veto power over persons suggested for assignment as district chiefs. This means that unless the province chief is able to work out some sort of informal arrangement or through past personal associations happens to have a particularly close working relationship with these subordinates, he is often at a loss to control some of their activities, particularly various forms of local corruption or other politically counter productive performance which hamper the overall success of the classification effort.

19. Unless and until some radical revision is made in the command and control relationships directly affecting the province chief the performance of his assigned responsibility and unless he is somehow given the measure of authority commensurate with the responsibilities he is called upon to discharge, I personally doubt if we will ever see much real progress in the classification effort

at the provincial level.

VII US ACTIONS AND THEIR IMPACT

20. US actions of recent months,--particularly the bombings of North Vietnam, the increased use of US air power in the South, and the direct involvement of combat units such as the Marines at DaNang--have had a very great and salutary affect on Vietnamese morale. ~~We-where~~ Almost nowhere did I find any appreciable measure of discouragement, defeatism, or strong inclinations to neutralist sentiments (except in certain left wing intellectual quarters where such sentiments can always be found). Apparently these feelings were very much in evidence last February, but the increased pace, tempo, and nature of the US involvement in the Vietnam situation since then has almost wiped them from the scene. There is a danger here, however, for the Vietnamese are as prone as any of their Asian neighbors to the psychological attitude of "what have you done for me lately." Some military figures and influential civilians are already beginning to become quite restless at the US unwillingness to attack

Hanoi directly, this sentiment is perhaps most thought among Vietnamese who are themselves from the North. If continued US pressure is kept within present parameters and does not materially affect VC activities or prevent the VC from launching new and major moves, part psychological lifts may be offset and indeed there may be a downturn in morale. Furthermore, should for external (i.e., outside of Vietnam) diplomatic or political reasons US should affect a "cause" in its pressure North of the 17th parallel, the impact of such a cause on Vietnamese morale would be disastrous.

21. The Vietnamese are hypersensitive and very proud people, are and strong nationalist sentiments arising from practically all quarters of the population. These attitudes will, in the future, make difficult certain aspects of GVN/US cooperation. Somewhat surprisingly, I found almost no present resentment of the introduction of rejected employment of US combat forces; indeed they seemed welcome on all sides. They will probably not be so welcome if they were employed on classification-type missions in heavily populated areas

such as the delta, but so long as they are used to defend cities and installations of obvious importance or, perhaps, to operate in support of GVN forces in relatively sparsely populated areas, it does not appear that they will cause any appreciable measure of local resentment. What they seem to resent, however, is the extent and pervasive nature of the US advisory effort, particularly the depth to which that effort now goes (i.e., down to district level in the provinces and down to battalion or, in some cases company, in the armed forces structure). Not a few of most staunchly nationalistic in anti-Communist Vietnamese contacts expressed a certain feeling of restlessness of this, felt the Americans were interfering perhaps too much in internal affairs, and, further, felt rather strongly that non-Vietnamese speaking US officers on a one-year tour are hardly in a position to give very much beneficial "advice" to Vietnamese officers who have been living and working with the problem they have to face five to ten years already. This is not a serious problem yet, but it is something that should be borne in mind in planning future US activity and an area of difficulty which should be kept under careful scrutiny.

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VIII VIETNAMESE MOOD AND TEMPER

22. On the whole, I was fairly encouraged by the general mood and temper of the Vietnamese with whom I talked, particularly those who occupy positions of present influence authority. There is a cautious degree of optimism about the future, and little sense of despair. There is great desire to see the war brought to a fairly early end, but some modest measure of confidence and ultimate victory--with the latter sentiment involving a great deal of alliance upon US support and a sometimes disturbing measure of confidence that the bulk of the work to be done can be achieved by US material means (e.g. airplanes, helicopter, and artillery) to the point that the Vietnamese perhaps will be saved from the necessity for extensive and present action on the ground. With due allowances for the building of religious tension cited above, the overall political outlook of most of the Vietnamese with whom I talked was one of mild or cautious optimism. There was a considerable measure of dissatisfaction with Quat, but no agreement as to who should replace

him, and a great deal of desire for some form of stability which was transluded into the politically useful sentiment of supporting Quat in the absense of any obviously preferable alternative. These sentiments are fragile things, however, and can easily be shattered by any of a number of possible events; an outbreak of religious discord, disruptive moves by Buddhists, Catholics, a series of military setbacks or psychologically spectacular VC victories, or-- perhaps above all--anything viewed in Vietnam as a sign of Us weakening or lack of resolve.

IX THE ENEMY: VC CAPABILITIES AND INTENSIONS

23. Perhaps the strongest impression that I gained during my trip was the snese that they were on the verge of witnessing a really major series of VC military moves, of an extent and nature which will involve virtually a new type of war. These views are based in part on evidence, in part on the informed judgment of people with whom I talked, and in part on impressions of my own all of which

add up to a sense of impending action that one can almost smell or touch.

24. With regard to the evidence, there are many signs that the VC since TET have been involved in a countrywide program of intensive retraining and re-equipping of their forces. There has been, as noted above, almost complete absence of VC -initiated major military activity since TET, but all indications are that this pause has been for regroupment and retraining and has not been something forced on the VC or improved ARVN performance. For example, in Binh Dinh, ARVN forces recently engaged a known VC main force unit, which had been in the area for sometime. This unit, however, had been completely re-equipped. Its troops had new uniforms, bedding, helmets, and were employing new weapons on the 7.62 mm family. Indeed there are wide signs of conversion to 7.62 mm weapons on the part of VC main forces particularly in I corps and II corps. I was surprised of at least four separate instances where--contrary to all previous practice--VC forces had left a field of engagement without either policing the weapons of their own casualties or taking with them the weapons of GVN elements they had overrun. This would

suggest that they no longer want or desire weapons employing US or French ammunition. There are further signs of VC preparation for a different type of military activity than they have heretofore practiced;; There are many signs they are preparing to use artillery. North of Daksut a survey party was recently captured in the process of laying out firing tables (for 75mm pop) the party had Daksut completely charted and mapped, was laying out naming circles, and was obviously preparing for downward future artillery action in this area. 70mm ~~bre~~ artillery rounds have been captured or discovered recently in weapons caches, even though this piece of ordinance has never been used before in Vietnam. There are widespread reports that the VC have been moving forces out of the delta area to concentrate in the highlands or move to the North. A great deal of this is propaganda and the best estimate of the situation I can make after looking into the matter fairly carefully is that there has been no actual movement of forces out of the delta though VC main force units in the Fourth corps area probably have been called upon to provide levies for use in II corps and I corps.

It would appear, however, that in every such case the unit itself with its designation has remained in the delta and that it has brought itself back up to strength by local recruitment (further supporting evidence for this lies the fact that in several recent engagements Vietnam's main force units, the bulk of the prisoners captured or the bodies noted on the field of battle have been 15-17 year old youths, a quite new development and complete departure from previous factors).

25. In terms of capabilities, the VC could cause considerable alarm and dispondency in I corps and II corps, and they also have an harrassing capability in III corps and IV corps. My own personal belief is that their main thrust will probably come in II corps, though it will be coordinated with activity in the other corps areas--particularly I corps--for maximum psychological affect and in order to pin down the greatest possible number of GVN forces.

26. In I corps VC forces are already thought to be massed both North and South of the ridge line which constitutes the Quang Tin--Quang Ngai province boundary. On the northern flank of this mountain

spear it is believed to be a regimental quarters. The forces thought to be in this area seem quite large enough to come down off of this mountain line and move straight to the sea, which is only three kilometers from the base of this ridge. An action of this nature would enable the VC to seize a coastal ~~entree~~ enclave, metaphorically "cut" Vietnam, and provide themselves at least for a time with a secure area from which they could offload sea supplies. If such a thrust is made, I would also expect a supplementary northern movement from this main force designed to overrun Tam Ky the capital of Quang Tin province. Tam Ky is already circled, encircled, and virtually invested. Its airstrip is under constant harassing fire, and in fact air and auricle planes will no longer land there since virtually every plane that does land gets shot at and receives a few hits. South of DaNang in the delta area the VC over the past few months have developed an elaborate hedge hog series of entrenched works and fortifications which could serve several purposes. For one, they could be employed as a base from whence

raiding parties could sally forth to harass DaNang and fall back on to prepared defense positions. More importantly the existence of this hedge would exhibit or prevent a lateral movement of GVN forces down the coast to relieve any pressure from the Quang Tin/Quang Nie border for any threat to Tam Ky. Southward in Quang Nie and in Binh Dinh GVN forces are already heavily engaged to the point where nothing is available for relief of any new threats in the Quang Tin-Tam Ky area, to pull forces out of Binh Dinh or Quang Nie but open those areas to increased VC incursions from Communist forces already known to be placed there. In Quang Ku province (the northern most province of South Vietnam) there have been persistent recent reports of infiltration directly across the DMZ, and a prominent buildup of Communist forces in the area. Everyone knowledgeable with whom I talked believed the VC were capable of drastically increasing their level of harassment in Quang Ty province, however, perhaps overwhelming one or more district towns, and certainly placing Quang Ty city itself under harassment fire. The Thua Chin Thien, the situation is equally fragile. The VC are already operating extremely close to the

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the beach in Hue. While I was in Hue, an operation was mounted against a VC district company, an operation which locked and loaded one perimeter outside the Hue city limits. The road between Phubar and Hue's municipal airport close by and Hue city is under constant interdiction, it runs to a village believed to house a VC district company, and US personnel traveling over this road have been shot at during broad daylight (e.g. while I was there a US sergeant was sniped at at 10:30 in the morning). The VC were already probing around the Phubar area, and indeed during my visit to Hue in the evening I could hear the GVN 105's shelling VC positions and the VC dropping 60 mm mortar rounds on GVN positions on the Phubar area. More disconcertingly, I learned that the southwestern approach to Hue is particularly vulnerable. There is known to be at least one VC main force battalion just southwest of Hue, with supporting elements including at least one district company. Between this known VC concentration and Hue city itself, on this axis of approach, there is only one under strength GVN ~~un~~ regional force company and three police posts. All knowledgeable persons with whom I talked in Hue

are firmly convinced that the VC could be in the city any night of their choosing, they could not hold Hue but they could certainly harass it, take parts of it, and run their flag up for psychological purposes. In some VC capabilities a widespread diversionary activity and harassment through the I corps area are formidable indeed.

27. In II corps, where I personally would anticipate the main thrust of VC action, the VC have the capability of attacking, and almost certainly overrunning all of the outpost north of Quang Tin. Of encircling and investing Quang Tin itself--perhaps taking it with some luck, of launching harassing fire and action against Pleiku, of cutting or at least seriously interdicting Route 19, (the main supply line linking II corps headquarters at Pleiku with the sea at Quanaahn) of putting harassing fire at Van Methuot, and of launching some form of harassing activity against Tuy Haa. These are capabilities now within the VC grasp employing only communist forces known to be in these areas. If the VC launched a series of diversionary harassing actions such as outlined above in I corps and

then followed up by major action in II corps of the type indicated above, they could convey the impression that the whole northern part of South Vietnam was erupting in flames and about to be detached from governmental control. Such a course of VC actions, if launched, would create an extremely adverse affect on Vietnamese morale and, further, ~~might-make~~ would almost certainly be intended to shake US will and determination perhaps to the point of forcing some form of negotiations or discussions under terms most unfavorable to the free world.

X THE ESTIMATE

28. It is difficult to estimate how the situation in Vietnam is going to evolve partly because the problems there are so complex and interacting and primarily because much depends on what the US, the GVN, and the Communists do in the forthcoming weeks and months. Barring major internal religious disturbances there seize successful VC actions, there is at least an even chance if not better that political stability will remain and perhaps some slight internal political progress will be reported. I personally believe, however,

that the longer term picture will be significantly influenced, if not determined, by the results of the military activities initiated by the VC in the ensuing weeks. If the Communists are successful in cracking other Vietnamese or US will, they will be in a very strong position indeed to consolidate politically their military gains and detach at least part if not all of South Vietnam from GVN control.

29. If, on the other hand, US and GVN forces are able to counter or cope with any moves the VC undertake and if GVN and US resolution is not shaken, then I believe the Communists will begin having serious morale problems of their own. In this latter event, should VC military moves of forthcoming weeks not be successful, we may be in a stronger political position in South Vietnam than we have been in for many years.

SECRET

TABLE 1

THE MARINE CORPS POINT SYSTEM FOR
EVALUATING PACIFICATION STATUS

	<u>Points</u>
1. <u>Destruction of Enemy Unit</u>	
a. VC units destroyed or expelled	15
b. Local defensive force established	<u>5</u>
	20
2. <u>Destruction of Enemy Infrastructure</u>	
a. Village census completed	2
b. VC infrastructure destroyed	8
c. Local intelligence net established	5
d. Census, grievance interviews completed	2
e. Action completed on grievances	<u>3</u>
	20
3. <u>Vietnamese Establishment of Security</u>	
a. Defensive plan completed	2
b. Defensive installations completed	3
c. Security forces trained and in place.	12
d. Communications net established	<u>3</u>
	20
4. <u>Establishment of Local Government</u>	
a. Village chief and council in office	4
b. Village chief residing in village	3
c. Hamlet chiefs and councils in office	4
d. Hamlet chiefs residing in hamlet	4
e. Psy-ops and information program established	3
f. Minimum social and administrative organization	<u>2</u>
	20
5. <u>Degree of New Life Program Development</u>	
a. Adequate public health program	4
b. Adequate education facilities	4
c. Adequate agricultural development	4
d. Adequate transportation facilities	4
e. Necessary markets established	<u>4</u>
	20
Total	100

* Marine Corps categories include under 20 percent secured, 20 percent, 40 percent, 60 percent, and 80 percent or higher secured.

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TABLE 2

MACV DETERMINES A HAMLET SECURED WHEN THE FOLLOWING HAVE BEEN ACCOMPLISHED:

1. Census.
VC infrastructure destroyed.
Intelligence net established.
2. Popular forces trained.
Popular forces armed.
Popular forces qualified, ready.
3. Hamlet security effective within village defense system.
4. Hamlet grievances aired.
Social/economic development projects begun.
5. Organization for RD and SD tasks.
6. Hamlet chiefs elected, trained, supported.

THE FOLLOWING ARE DEFINITIONS FOR THE MACV CATEGORIES OF AREA PACIFICATION:

Undergoing Clearing

1. RVNAF and/or FWMAF conducting operations to oust VC or NVA (company size minimum).
2. Can maintain or enhance security status achieved.

Undergoing Securing

1. Company size and over VC units eliminated.
2. RVNAF or FWMAF can prevent return.
3. Regular and Popular Forces operations provide security.
4. RD cadres working in hamlets to establish local government and eliminate VC infrastructure.

Secured

1. Hamlets secured or being consolidated.
2. Village councils elected.
3. Village administration committees appointed, trained and have support.
4. VC forces out and cannot return.

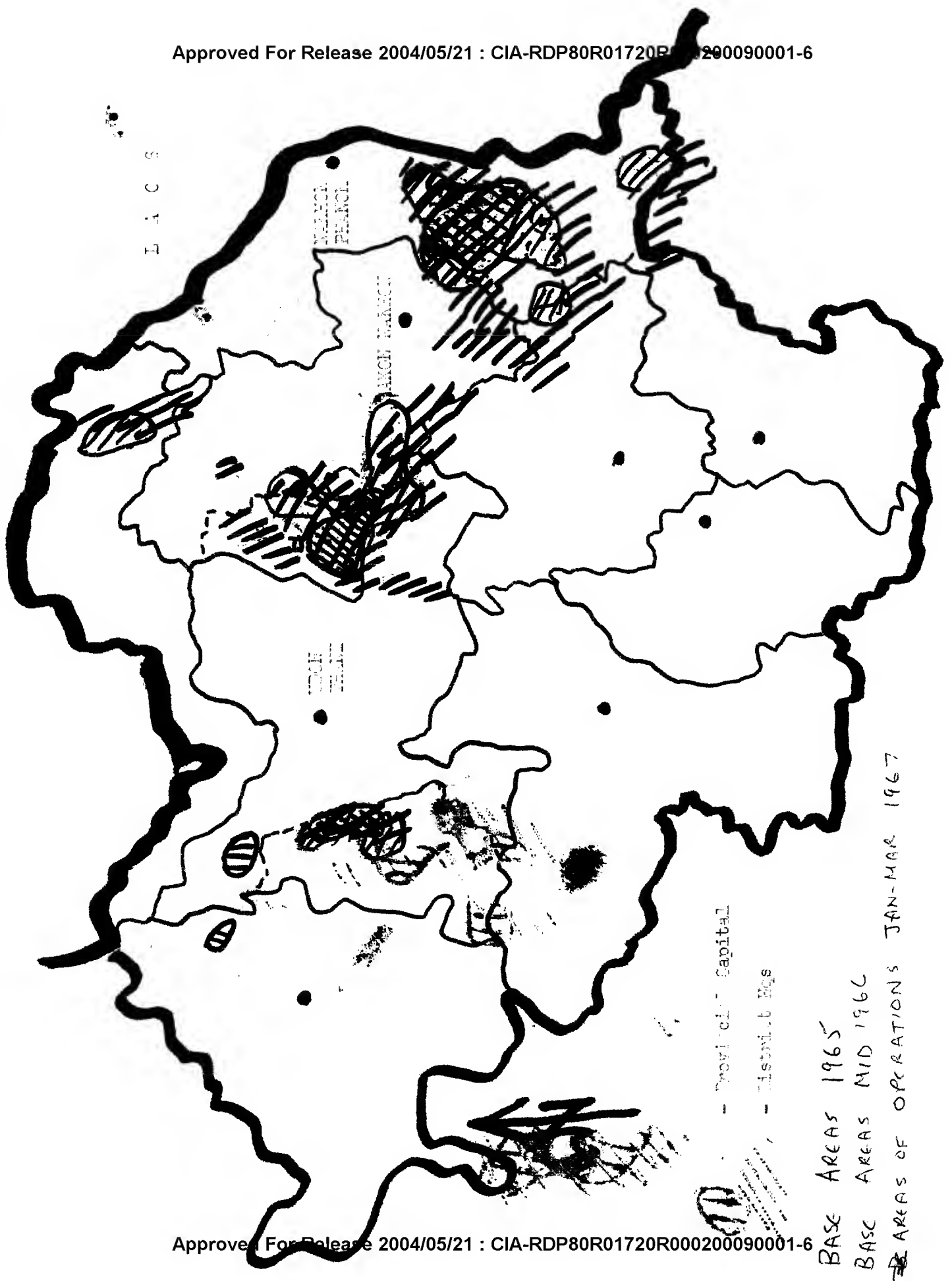
Uncontested

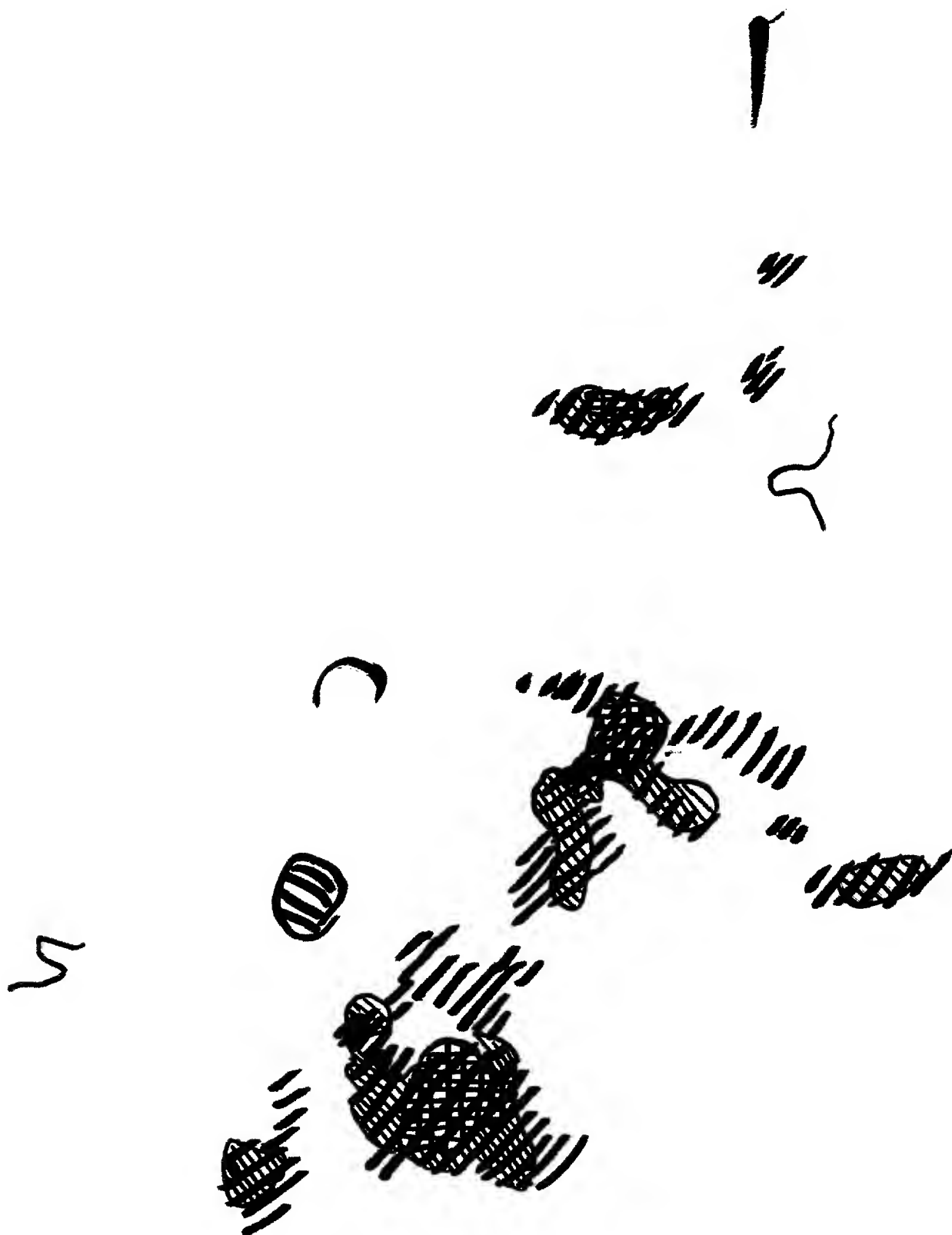
1. Neither actively attempting to exert political or military control.
2. Uninhabited area of no tactical or strategic importance.

VC Control

1. No GVN political or military presence.
2. VC can keep Regular and Popular Forces out.

SECRET







Positive capacity / possibility angle

- Ltr to Director: to direct to Pentagon
request is to invoke CRA.

① Cannot buy better

(a) come up sta ✓

(b) Invoke CRA ✓

(c) support probs ✓

② Review all

③ All begs question

Switch back

We have help for liaison w Police at
National level (DANP), Sp Branch

(1) Not nec. negligible, but prog. lacking & split resp.
contributory factor

(2) Creation p. C2 one thing, making him military another

(1) To be chart

- Intell side of station not to be divided

—

-I

W/o Respect to origin in that sep intel cap of
station in way that would prevent us
withdrawal of those

(a) Place our pac assets under com

(b) Host as deputy to commander.

options

If Really talking about Revolutionary Development

25X1

1. Summary Paragraph (2 Questions)

2. On specific proposal, are prepared to give
up RD, but Balkanization of ID cannot
buy

sep intel cap

3. Actually we could live with SPB, &

Next 1 Page(s) In Document Exempt

Non-Revolutionary Development Strength Figures

This form is a means of keeping track of the number of non-RD personnel you have on your payroll. Simply fill in the numbers in the appropriate categories. Be sure to give some explanation for any figure appearing in the "other" blank. All personnel who appear on your payroll must be accounted for on a Strength and Location form.

DATE

PROVINCE

MONTHLY STRENGTH, LOCATION,

and LOSS REPORT

FOR THE MONTH OF

SIGNATURE OF
REPORTING OFFICER

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[illegible][illegible]

(See Instructions on Reverse Side)

DOC FORM 1

INSTRUCTIONS

Only RD Teams, RD Control Groups, Truong Son RD Teams* and Static Census Grievance (SCG) personnel and non-FRU paramilitary units will be recorded on this form. Administrative and support personnel (not RD) will be accounted for on an other form.

RD Teams, RD Control Groups, Truong Son RD Teams -
Give team number (or identify as a control group) strength, district, village, and map coordinates for each individual unit. Personnel on leave, TDY and/or hospitalized must be considered as assigned and carried within the total province unit strengths. Conversely, students in training, including leadership courses at the NTC or at PMTC are not considered firmly assigned or present for in-province duty. Therefore, the status and strengths of the students at the NTC and PMTC will not be reported by the provincial reporting officer.

All losses, killed, captured, discharged, resigned, desertions, and retired must be reported and subtracted from the unit strengths. You are reminded that you are required to submit a list of names of those who fall into the above categories.

CG Personnel - Give the total number of CG personnel in your province, be sure to include the personnel in your study center. There is no need to give their location.

Paramilitary Monthly Strength and Location - On a separate sheet, list all non-FRU irregular paramilitary units in your province such as Truong Son Forces, River Rats etc.

*Truong Son RD Teams (TSRDT) is the new designation for the consolidated Montagnard Civil Affairs Teams (MCAT) and the Montagnard Political Action Teams (MPAT). If this consolidation has not yet taken place in your province, list your teams as you have in the past.